The Resurgence of Story Based Games

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One of the most popular gaming genres in recent years is also one of gaming's oldest. While many think of the quintessential video game to be a third-person shooter, action, or fighting game, many of the first video games revolved around narratives and plot over gameplay and mechanics.

1977's *Zork*, one of the first commercially viable games, was an interactive text game that used an innovative command driven gameplay to guide the player through a rich inner world and setting. This was followed up by 1998's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which used a similar style to become one of the decade's best-selling games.

A 21st Century Decline and Rebirth

However, while story-based games continued to be successful into well into the late 1990's, there was a significant lull in their popularity in the 2000's, and early 2010's. As gaming console and PCs became ever more powerful and capable of supporting advanced graphics and mechanics, it appeared that the narrative and story driven game was on its way out.

Fortunately, a recent resurgence of story and narrative based games has made the genre once again one of the most popular and best-selling in the industry. 2015's *Life Is Strange* revitalized the genre as it won multiple Game of the Year awards and listings and helped launch a popular and best-selling new franchise. 2016's *Firewatch* continued the trend, winning multiple awards while selling more than two million copies.

Now, story-based games are among the most popular across all systems and consoles. Whether it's *What Remains of Edith Finch*, *Genesis Noir*, or *The Artful Escape*, story and narrative games are here to stay.

A Newfound Popularity

Part of the renewed popularity of story games is the greater diversity of the current gaming audience. Many gamers are not interested in a traditional experience based on lightning quick reflexes and the coordination that comes from muscle memory and repetitive practice. Or they may be turned off at the prospect of investing the hundreds of playing hours it may take to complete an open-world RPG. To many of these gamers, a game that focuses on an enriching and engaging narrative, minimizes difficult gaming mechanics, and completes in less than fifteen hours is an appealing option.

As gaming grows increasingly diverse, it's only natural to expect that the range of games and gaming genres would reflect that. Every gamer should be free to play the game of their choice. Whether that's a high-paced and heart-stopping shooter, or a slowed down story-driven game.

As Xbox Ambassadors, we celebrate gamers and gaming in all forms, and love to see creativity expressed through a range of different genres and types of games. While each of us might prefer different games, we all understand the enrichment, joy, and fun that comes with gaming.

Do you love playing story-based games? What are some of your favorites? Let us know in the comments below!